

Agency: Commerce, Community and Economic Development**Grants to Named Recipients (AS 37.05.316)****Grant Recipient: Norton Sound Health Corporation****Federal Tax ID: 920041488****Project Title:**

Norton Sound Health Corporation - Residential Mental Health & Substance Abuse Treatment Facility

State Funding Requested: \$ 100,000**House District: 39 - T**

One-Time Need

Brief Project Description:

Evaluation and planning for programs and services targeting the behavioral health needs

Funding Plan:**Total Cost of Project: \$100,000**Funding Secured*Amount FY*Other Pending Requests*Amount FY*Anticipated Future Need*Amount FY*

There is no other funding needed

Detailed Project Description and Justification:

The Norton Sound service area has the highest rates of suicide and one of the highest rates of alcohol abuse in the State of Alaska. Norton Sound Health Corporation (NSHC) supports continued funding for suicide prevention programs. NSHC is currently admitting suicidal patients and patients in extreme mental distress for evaluation into our Inpatient Unit at our critical access hospital. NSHC is having outpatient based mental health clinicians consult with the hospital physicians on mental health and substance abuse evaluations within the Inpatient Unit. These patients often require 24 hour supervision. This supervision is provided by a NSHC staff person sitting in the hallway monitoring patients for their won safety. NSHC's limited funds currently target outpatient treatment. NSHC is not designed or staffed to provide psychiatric treatment services within the facility. Patients whose diagnosis requires residential treatment must be sent out of the Bering Strait region, mostly to Kotzebue and Anchorage, for treatment. Approximately one-third of the patients who receive inpatient hospital services and are diagnosed with substance dependence related disorders are referred out of the region. Nome is the only hub in Alaska without residential treatment. Intoxicated patients who arrive or are delivered to our emergency room by local law enforcement agencies fill beds and occupy limited physical space within our Emergency Room and our Inpatient Unit. They also divert resources for other patients. The inebriate population puts a tremendous strain both financially and emotionally on the organization. Many staff leaving NSHC cite their negative experiences and work environment related to dealing with inebriated patients as a reason for leaving. Over 15% of the 3,107 patients presenting in the Emergency Room between August 2006 and July 2007 had a primary diagnosis related to substance abuse. In the Inpatient Unit the substance abuse primary diagnosis is only exceeded by pregnant mothers who have come to deliver their children. Combined inpatient admissions for mental health and substance abuse related concerns equal nearly 30/% of the total annual admissions. The number of beds throughout the state is inadequate to service the statewide needs for substance abuse. Most treatment centers give priority to clients who are from their area, making it more difficult for them to accommodate out of region clients. This situation creates barriers for NSHC patients to access appropriate treatment. It is

extremely difficult for many patients to commit to residential treatment outside the region. Leaving family and home with the strain of waiting for placement, greatly diminishes their motivation. We are challenged by the lack of services at the community level for clients returning from residential treatment. It has been an ongoing challenge to coordinate follow up support in both evaluation and monitoring of patients health.

Project Timeline:

July 2008 through June 2009

Entity Responsible for the Ongoing Operation and Maintenance of this Project:

Norton Sound Health Corporation

Grant Recipient Contact Information:

Contact Name: Helen Pootoogooluk

Phone Number: 907-443-3337

Address: PO Box 966 Nome AK 99762

Email: pootoogooluk@nshcorp.org

Has this project been through a public review process at the local level and is it a community priority? ☐ Yes ☒ No

**The Norton Sound Health Corporation Board of Directors
requests your support in developing and maintaining the
following critical health related projects and programs:**



The 2007 Norton Sound Health Corporation Board of Directors

- **Planning funds for Long Term Care and residential treatment services for Substance Abuse and Mental Health**
- **Funding for NSHC to advance the development of its Electronic Health Record**
- **Funding for Utility upgrades required to support the new Norton Sound Hospital**
- **Increases in Public Health funding for Tuberculosis**
- **Support for establishing a Nursing Program through the University of Alaska to meet our regional nursing shortfall**
- **Continued funding and support for Housing for Health Professionals, Village Public Safety Officer Program, The Code Blue Program, Solid Waste Management Training Funds, Suicide Prevention Funding**

Residential Mental Health & Substance Abuse Treatment Facility

The Norton Sound service area has the highest rates of suicide and one of the highest rates of alcohol abuse in the State of Alaska. **NSHC supports continued funding for suicide prevention programs.** NSHC is currently admitting suicidal patients and patients in extreme mental distress for evaluation into our Inpatient Unit at our critical access hospital. NSHC is having outpatient based mental health clinicians consult with the hospital physicians on mental health and substance abuse evaluations within the Inpatient Unit. These patients often require 24 hour supervision. This supervision is provided by a NSHC staff person sitting in the hallway monitoring patients for their own safety. NSHC's limited funds currently target outpatient treatment. NSHC is not designed or staffed to provide psychiatric treatment services within the facility. Patients whose diagnosis requires residential treatment must be sent out of the Bering Strait region, mostly to Kotzebue and Anchorage, Alaska for treatment. Approximately one-third of the patients who receive inpatient hospital services and are diagnosed with substance dependence related disorders are referred out of the region. **Nome is the only hub in Alaska without residential treatment.**

This photo, taken this summer is an all too common sight. When compounded by winter temperatures of twenty below, the elements take lives and limbs.

[Below] Police officer, Ian Koenig, tries to rouse an incapacitated man behind a building in Nome. Nome police officers estimate they spend a third of their time tending to intoxicated people.



**Photo by AL GRILLO / The Associated Press
Story by Rachel D'oro / The Associated Press
Published: September 10, 2007, Photo from Anchorage Daily News Website: Oasis for alcohol:**

Intoxicated patients who arrive or are delivered to our emergency room by local law enforcement agencies fill beds and occupy limited physical space within our Emergency Room and our Inpatient Unit. They also divert resources from other patients. The inebriate population puts a tremendous strain both financially and emotionally on the organization. Many staff leaving NSHC cite their negative experiences and the work environment related to dealing with inebriated patients as a reason for leaving.

Over 15% of the 3,107 patients presenting in the Emergency Room between August 2006 and July 2007 had a primary diagnosis related to substance abuse. In the Inpatient Unit, the substance abuse primary diagnosis is only exceeded by pregnant mothers who have come to deliver their children. Combined inpatient admissions for mental health and substance abuse related concerns equal nearly 30% of the total annual admissions.

The number of beds throughout the state are inadequate to serve the statewide needs for substance abuse. Most treatment centers give priority to clients who are from their area, making it more difficult for them to accommodate out-of-region clients. This situation creates barriers for NSHC patients to access appropriate treatment. It is extremely difficult for many patients to commit to residential treatment outside the region. Leaving family and home with the strain of waiting for placement, greatly diminishes their motivation.

We are challenged by the lack of services at the community level for clients returning from residential treatment. It has been an ongoing challenge to coordinate follow-up support in both evaluation and monitoring of patients health.

In 2007, the Alaska Federation of Natives passed a resolution to support funding for a treatment facility in each of the 12 regions in Alaska. **NSHC requests \$100,000 to conduct evaluation and planning for programs and services targeting the behavioral health needs of its constituents.**